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feature of the landscape which we could not admire, namely, a large party of Arab horsemen at some distance below us on the left, who we feared were on the look-out for us. Keeping as much as practicable along the side of the mountains, and moving as silently but as quickly as possible, we continued up the valley of the Fār'a on a general course of about north-west, till we had to descend to cross the stream; after which we continued up the other side, and then proceeded westward, till at 4.45 P.M. we arrived at the village of Beit Dejān, occupying the site of an ancient town, the remains of which are deserving of being thoroughly explored.

On the following morning (January 10th) we left Beit Dejān, crossing the fertile plain of Sālim (Shalem) to Nablūs—the Shechem of Scripture,—which city we reached soon after noon. Arrived at this well-known place, it is unnecessary to say anything respecting our further proceedings, except that from Nablūs we went to Jerusalem, and thence to Jaffa on our way home.

As the object of our journey from Harran had been to follow, as closely as possible, in the footsteps of the Patriarch Jacob, it is proper, before concluding, to remark that, after he had left Succoth and crossed the Jordan (as explained in a preceding page), he would have entered Wady Fār'a at its junction with the Ghor, passing between the Makhrūd and Kārñ Sārtebeh; and that, continuing up the valley, he would at length have fallen into the road taken by us, by which he “came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-Aram, and pitched his tent before the city.”

Bekesbourne, May 7th, 1862.

IX.—*The Hermon, and the Physical Features of Syria and Northern Palestine.* By JOHN WORTABET, M.D.

IN all the geographical researches made in Syria and Palestine there has not been given, as yet—with the exception, perhaps, of an article by the Rev. J. L. Porter ('*Bibliotheca Sacra*,' Jan., 1854 *)—a full account of the Hermon, and of the truly grand and panoramic scenery which may be seen from its highest peak. And yet it is from the top of this mountain alone that we have the best observatory, from whence the general and well-defined outlines of a large part of Syria and Northern Palestine may be taken in one long and comprehensive sweep of the eye.

The highest peak of the Hermon may be reached from three different places. The first is Kal'at Jendal, a village lying to the

* See '*Royal Geographical Journal*,' vol. xxvi. p. 43.—ED.

east of the mountain, and perched on one of the hills which form the basement of the high-towering Hermon. This starting-point has the advantage of being situated on one of the high roads from Damascus to Hasheiya. The traveller from Damascus, therefore, as he crosses the ridge of the Hermon at a point about an hour and a-half south from the highest peak, instead of making the descent on the west, takes a path to the north. The *second* is Rasheiya. The road is very steep, and makes the ascent of several thousand feet in about three hours. The *third* is Hasheiya, and the journey up takes about six hours and a-half. This, by far, is the easiest and most convenient to the traveller coming from the south; and his best plan would be to go by Shwaiah and Ayun Jin'im—the Shib'a route being very craggy, unsafe, and extremely fatiguing.

The distance between Hasheiya and Ayun Jin'im is about three hours and a-half. The traveller, after leaving Shwaiah, a village on the eastern part of the mountain-range which forms an amphitheatre around Hasheiya, ascends the mountain to the east, and, after traversing it in a north-easterly direction, descends into a wady which runs to Shib'a on the south and Rasheiya on the north—the road connecting these two places lying in the wady. The fountains, which have given their name to the place ('Ayun), consist of a few ditches filled with dirty water, which exudes slowly in two petty puddles. The ditches serve to collect the water, and were apparently made by the goatherds for watering their goats, which browse for a large part of the year on the sides of the Hermon. The elevation of Ayun Jin'im from the sea cannot be much less than 5000 or 6000 feet.

The road from the fountains up the mountain takes an easterly direction, and lies in a kind of gorge, which, however, gets obliterated as we approach the ridge or back of the Hermon. The sides of this gorge are covered with the shrub tragacanth, from which large quantities of gum are collected by the peasantry, and sold in the markets of Damascus. This shrub rises from one to two feet high, with a thick stem and numerous closely-crowded and spreading branches, which give it the appearance of a small umbrageous tree. The gum exudes in the summer, and is aromatic.* It was once extensively used in medicine, and, though now still found among the articles of the 'Materia Medica,' very little use is made of it. By the natives of the country it is chiefly used in the arts. This gum tragacanth is supposed to be the *קנה סוס* (Necôth) of the Scriptures, translated in the English Version *spice*, and mentioned in Genesis xxxvii. 25, and xliii. 11, as a kind of spice imported to Egypt from Syria. The chief argu-

* The gum tragacanth of Asia Minor is very tasteless and insipid.—W. J. H.

ment that this gum is the Necôth of Scripture is the observable identity of the Hebrew word with the Arabic name نَكَة (Nekat), or نَكَاة (Nek'at).

As the traveller approaches the back of the ridge the tragacanth disappears entirely—almost suddenly—and a strange-looking bush takes its place. It has the very remarkable appearance of a little mound, varying from an inch in diameter to three or four feet. It never grows higher than two feet, and is covered in summer with very pretty red florets, each of which is attached to a sharp-pointed thorn. About half-way up there is what is called a fountain (Ain Sabrun), but which hardly deserves the name, being a very slow and scanty exudation of water into a very small puddle. The ascent from Ayun Jin'im to the back of the ridge takes about one hour and a-half, and is quite steep throughout, though one is not obliged at any time to dismount in going up. In descending, it is optional with the rider. The elevation from the fountains of Jin'im is probably between 2000 and 3000 feet.

Up to this point the road lies in a well-beaten track, which is followed by the neighbouring villagers to and from Damascus; caravans of mules rarely take this route, owing to its steep and rugged character. On reaching the ridge the traveller strikes for the highest peak in a northerly direction, taking the easiest passes among the summits which lie between him and the top, and generally ascending as he approaches it. The Hermon is wholly covered with snow during the winter and the earlier part of the spring; in the latter part of the spring it gradually dissolves, leaving the long fissures and chasms of the mountain glittering with the white element. Whether these long white streaks, like the grey hairs of age, have gained for it the name of Djebel el Sheikh (the Old Man's Mountain), or its hoary appearance in winter, or the princely attitude which it holds in the estimation of the people among the mountains of Syria, is altogether uncertain. As summer recedes and autumn advances, only a few large banks of snow remain in shaded positions; the surface thus brought to view has the appearance of utter barrenness, with only a few thorny shrubs to be seen on it. Hardly a bird or any other animal seeks its food amid the sterile elevation. Nor is cultivation attempted at a point higher than some 3000 feet from the top. It takes about one hour and a-half to reach the highest summit from that point on the ridge where the traveller, leaving the Damascus road, strikes to the north; thus making the distance from the fountains of Jin'im just three hours.

The height of the Hermon has not yet been satisfactorily ascertained: while some have put it as low as 8500 feet, others raise it to over 12,000. And so in reference to the comparative height

of Mount Lebanon and Mount Hermon. It was generally supposed at one time that the latter was higher than Sunnîn, which was also supposed to be the highest point on the Lebanon; but of late this summit was found to be at least 500 feet lower than that which towers above the Cedars (Mekmel), and which was found to be about 9175 feet high. Brande, in his 'Dictionary of Science, Literature, and Art' ("Mountains"), gives the height of Lebanon as 9520 feet. Dr. Kitto, computing from the data that the point of perpetual congelation in Syria is 11,000 feet, makes both the Sunnîn and the Hermon a little above this number, though he inclines to the opinion that the latter is the loftier of the two. This view is corroborated by the testimony of many travellers, who assert that from the outskirts of Syria and from the sea the top of the Hermon is seen first and last; and we may add that the natives of the country believe, apparently on the strength of this fact, that the Hermon is the highest. According to the measurements of some of the American missionaries with the aneroid, Hermon is made out to be 9500 feet; Mekmel, the highest summit of the Lebanon, some 300 feet lower; Fum el Mizab about 9000, and Sunnîn about 700 or 800 feet lower than the Hermon. These numbers are probably not far from the truth, and in the present state of the question they are the most reliable of any we have. The late lamented Dr. J. R. Kôth, who arrived in the summer of 1858 to take the altitude of the Hermon with the most perfect instrument of its kind, died at its foot without having accomplished his object.

On reaching the summit are the remains of an old building around a rocky eminence at the highest point or apex of the peak. No part, however, of the ancient edifice remains except a few large and well-cut, but unlevelled, blocks of stone strewn about; but in such a way as to lead to the supposition that a wall once encircled the rocky projection. Most of the stones lie at the base of the peak, several thousand feet below to the east, the mountain being very steep and smooth on that side. We are not aware that any columns or capitals exist among the *débris*, certainly not on the summit itself. The only other work of art there is a subterraneous cavern cut in the rock, about 100 feet to the north. Judging from the site and the character of the stones, the building on the peak was probably a temple; and the cavern, which forms a large and convenient room to live in, was apparently used by the priests as a shelter from the cold piercing winds, which make the habitation of the mountain even in midsummer very uncomfortable. May this have been the Baal Hermon of the Scriptures? The ancient idolaters of Syria chose the sites of their temples most generally in some wild region of Nature, and on some highly-perched peak or cliff of a mountain; and hence "to eat upon the

mountains" (Ezekiel xviii. 6) was an expression equivalent to a participation in idolatrous worship. Now, the Hermon has a large number of temples built on the hills and in the country which lies at its base. The following are a few of them:—the temple of Pan, in Banias; the temple in Hibbaryeh, where in the inscription the name of the god is, however, illegible; and the beautiful temple of Ain Hersha, with a bust and full figures of Diana, and the following inscription:—

ΑΛΗΘΕΒΗ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ ΕΑΡΑΔ ΙΕΡΕΥΣ

If Baal Hermon, therefore, was a temple, no better site for eminence and extent of scenery could be selected than our summit. Gesenius, however, controverts this meaning of Baal Hermon, and believes it to represent a town near Mount Hermon; and certainly the way in which this place is mentioned in 1 Chronicles v. 23, as being geographically distinct from the mountain, is in favour of the view which he takes. We must reluctantly give up, therefore, the fine idea that the temple which once crowned the highest peak of the Hermon is not the Baal Hermon of Scripture, but some temple of perhaps a later date, dedicated to some Syrian god unknown to us.

The panoramic scenery which unfolds itself to the view of the traveller from this elevated observatory is truly magnificent; and he feels himself fully repaid for all the trouble and toil of the journey as he surveys the whole country lying at his feet, and all its physical outlines boldly and clearly defined. The blue Mediterranean lies to the west as far as the eye can reach: in one part its shores invisible, from the intervening mountains; and in another its white foam, as it breaks itself against the mainland, looks as if the coast of Syria were limned with the artist's pencil. The majestic Lebanon is stretched before the observer, and allows him to note its rise and progress and fall—its ridges and peaks and breaks—its eastern base, its rise in the north, and its losing itself among the hills of the south. The irregular anti-Lebanon meeting the Lebanon on the north, and with it enclosing the fine plains of Cælo-Syria, stretches itself to the plains of Damascus; the Hermon, standing over against the southern part of Lebanon, is divided from it by Wady el Taym; the hilly and undulating country of the Metawileh, extending on the west as far as the sea, terminates on the east with a high and abrupt ridge, which forms the western wall of the basin of the Hûleh; the eastern, over against it, beginning the fine tableland of the Gaulanitis. Djebel Safet and Djebel 'Ajlûn, the Lake of Tiberias, Mount Tabor, the country of Nazareth, the plains of Esdraelon, Mount Carmel, the mountains of Nablous, are more or less distinctly seen to the south. To the east, the Hauran ridge, Damascus and its plains, the wide valley which separates

the Hauran from the Hermon, the Gaulanitis, and Ajlûn, the hilly Iturea (Jaidûr), the plains of Bozrah—all these combine to give the observer a definite and clear geographical knowledge of the mountains and valleys and plains of Syria and Northern Palestine, for which he can find no adequate representation on the maps and in the books of the most accurate travellers. The latter part of the spring and earlier part of the summer are the proper times for making the visit to the best advantage. After the flow of the Nile the atmosphere gets hazy, mists settle on the mountains and plains, the vision is obscured, and large portions are sometimes completely veiled from view. The cold also in the other seasons of the year is intense. In my last ascent, although it was a very hot sirocco below, the wind on the top was so piercing that we danced with the cold.

Let us now take a more analytical view of the well-defined outlines of the mountains and country as they are seen from the top of the Hermon.

The Hermon itself, as viewed from its highest summit, extends N.N.W. by S.S.E. Its true northern boundary, we apprehend, is a large wide chasm to the east of Rasheiya, which divides it from the Anti-Lebanon range; to the south, it runs as far as Bania and the Jawlan; while on the north it has the form of one large mountain; on the south it gets broken up, and at one place, where it runs to the Jawlan, it has the distinct name of Djebel el Heish. On both its eastern and western sides there are ridges and groups of hills which run along with it, and whose slopes and valleys are cultivated and populated. The eastern is called Aklîm el Bellan, and the western Wady el Taym; the fissure here between the Lebanon and the Hermon having the appearance of a great valley. The whole length of the Hermon cannot be more than 20 miles.

The Anti-Lebanon sends a branch of mountains to the north-west. This is met by an extension of the Lebanon, which runs there a little to the east; and thus a kind of junction is apparently formed between the two mountains. A wide pass, however, continues to separate them, at the same time connecting the plains of Cælo-Syria on the south, with the plains of Hamah on the north. Indeed, it forms a natural gateway to the latter, and, in our opinion, defines itself to be clearly the "entering in of Hamath" of Scripture. The other branch of the Anti-Lebanon extends as far to the south-east as the chasm which separates it from the Hermon, thus skirting the plains of Damascus and forming their western boundary.

Looking to the west from our standpoint, the Lebanon lies stretched for a long distance north and south; but it is observed to be much higher in its northern than in its southern portions. It

is also somewhat longer than both the Anti-Lebanon and the Hermon together. In its more northern extremity it has three distinct elevations, divided from each other, and which point more or less east and west. The first, Djebel Mekmel, is found from barometrical measurement to be the highest, and forms a kind of amphitheatre facing the west, and hanging over the Cedars; the second is the famous Sunnîn, for a long time considered the highest peak on the Lebanon; and the third is Kunayseh. The mountain then extends to the south in a smooth, uniform ridge as far as a point to the south-west of Deir el Kamar—the principal town of the Lebanon—where it abruptly breaks to a slightly diminished elevation. The depressed ridge continues its even course for some distance, and then bifurcates into two branches: the eastern bearing Yawmat Niha—two conical peaks often noticed by travellers—gets broken up near Jisr Burjos on the Leontes, to the west of Sûk el Khan. The western branch is called Djebel el Rihan, descends into a lower group of mountains, assumes the shape of a tongue, and loses itself in the hilly country of Belad Shukeif. The Shukeif itself is properly a low continuation of the Lebanon, with the Leontes, as it turns westward, forming its southern boundary; but, as it is inhabited by a different people, this physical division is not regarded, and the Lebanon is made to terminate at the southern limits of Djebel el Rihan, between which, however, and the Shukeif there are well-marked valleys, and in one place a small stream, El Zahrany.

Belad el Shukeif is a high table land studded with gently undulating hills, and is bounded on the north by the valleys and the stream Zahrany, which divide it from the Lebanon; on the east and south by the Leontes, which runs close at its base; and on the west by the Mediterranean. The western portion of this district is called Aklim el Shumar. The most conspicuous object seen at a distance is its castle—Kalaat el Shukeif—known in the time of the Crusaders by the name of Belfort, the largest, and probably the most ancient in Syria. The whole district is noted for the heavy dews which fall on it; and this circumstance is turned to account by the inhabitants in the cultivation of tobacco, an article which they raise in large quantities, and which forms a principal source of their livelihood.

Belad Beshara is a more hilly and wild *tahlen*, and is divided from Belad el Shukeif by the Leontes, which runs between them east and west. It is divided into three districts—Djebel Hunîn, Djebel Tibnîn, and Sahil Maarakeh—all lying parallel to each other, east and west. Djebel Hunîn forms the western border of the basin of the Huleh, and runs to the south as far as the mountains of Safet, from which it is divided by a valley called Ūba.

From Djebel el Rihan to Safet the country is inhabited by the Metawileh—the Sheïte Mohammedans of Syria—and, in the times of the Jewish Commonwealth, was possessed by the tribes of Naphtali and Asher. It is remarkable for its scanty provision of water. Belad el Shukeif, Djebel Humîn, Djebel Tibnîn, and Sahil Cona—the latter to the south of and included in Belad Beshara—have each a separate Governor nominated by the Pasha of Beyrout.

We shall now return to follow to some distance the great valley which separates the Lebanon on the one side and the Anti-Lebanon and Hermon on the other, and which increases in depression as it runs to the south, until this depression reaches its ultimatum in the Dead Sea. But a small portion of Cœlo-Syria is visible from our standpoint; owing to a part of the Hermon and a part of the Anti-Lebanon range covering it from view. On the north, however, it is seen beginning at the pass which divides the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon as they approximate to each other, a little north of Baalbec. These two mountains form its eastern and western borders; and it ends on the south, at a line with the southern termination of the Anti-Lebanon.

The Leontes, taking its rise in and near Baalbec, meanders through the plains of El Bukaa, till it reaches Jib Jennîn, the south-western point of Cœlo-Syria, when it skirts the Lebanon and runs close at its eastern base, as far as Belad Shukeif. There, after keeping its southern course for some distance, it makes a sudden and sharp angular turn, and runs westward to the sea, a few miles north of Tyre; thus forming the eastern and southern boundaries of Belad el Shukeif. From Jib Jennîn a high spur of hills rises, which, with the exception of one break at Merj el Shemeiseh, extends as far south as Burjos, parallel to and close by the Lebanon, with only the Leontes flowing between them. Opposite to this spur—that is to say to the east—another range of hills rises near Rasheiya, and, running to the base of the Hermon, terminates at Sûk el Khan, a little south of Hasheiya. Between these two ranges of hills the valley is still of some width—from three to six miles—and its extreme northern and southern points, Rasheiya and Sûk el Khan, make the length about 18 miles. This is the famous Wady el Taym. It is divided into the Upper, of which Rasheiya is the principal village; and the Lower, of which Hasheiya is the chief town; the population of both being about 30,000 souls.

Merj Ayun is another basin or “hollow” formed by two lines of hills which converge on the north and south, and are divided on the west from the Shukeif by the Leontes, and on the west by

the river Hasbany. It is a very fertile plain, and bears on the hills which enclose it some 8 or 10 villages. It is about 4 miles in length, and from 1 to 2 in breadth.

The Huleh is another basin, about 20 miles long, and half as broad; crested on the west by Djebel Hunîn, and on the east by the high tableland of the Jawlan. Here, and about the middle of the plain, the rivers Hasbany, Banissy, and Leddan unite their waters and run into the lake Huleh. These are the two sources of the Jordan—the most remote of them being the Hasbany—though many tributaries increase the volume of water as it flows through the Lake of Tiberias and Ghôr to the Dead Sea.

The Jawlan is a high tableland which rises on the west above the basin of the Huleh, thus forming its eastern border. It begins on the north at the high and southern termination of the Hermon, which is known there by the name of Djebel el Heish, and extends as far south as Ard Fîk, from which it is divided by Wady el Samak. Ard Fîk is a group of mountains which runs along the eastern shore of Tiberias, and which bears on two of its peaks the village of Fik—the Scripture Apek (1 Kings xx. 26)—and Kulaat el Husn, the Gamala of Josephus. It is divided from Djebel 'Ajlûn (Mount Gilead) by Wady Shellali. The line of division put on the maps generally is the river Yarmûk.

The Hauran ridge is clearly observable from the top of the Hermon. It begins on the north, at a point south or south-east from Damascus, with the redoubtable Ledja. This is a rocky mass of mountains which lies to the east from our point of observation, and from all accounts seems to be a strong natural fortress, supposed by the Druzes of the Hauran to be impregnable. The Hauran chain stretches in an even line to the south, and terminates a little to the south of the castle called Salkhad—the ancient Salcha. The celebrated Bozra is in the plain, west of Salkhad. The termination of the Hauran mountains is a little south from a line with the southern end of the Lake Tiberias. El Nukrah, El Jaidûr, and El Rekkad are districts which lie successively between the Hauran and the Jawlan. El Kunaiterah is another district, and lies north of the Jawlan; between it and El Jaiden, Wady el Ajam, is the great hilly valley which divides the Hauran from the Hermon. It becomes more open and even, as it loses itself in the plains of Damascus. The lakes into which El Awaj and Barada discharge themselves—the former taking its rise from the eastern slopes of the Hermon—are seen in the distance.
